

National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board Meeting
Denver, CO

August 26-27, 2002

Board members Present: Robin Lohnes, Brent Eldridge, Bill Higham, Larry Johnson, Richard Sewing, Dr. Jay Merriam, Hillary Bogley, Wayne Burkhardt. **Washington Office and BLM Staff:** Ron Wenker, John Fend, Doug Koza, CO Acting Associate State Director, Tom Pogacnik, Janet Nordin, Pam Cleary, Terry Woosley, Debbie Harrington and Ramona DeLorme.
APHIS: Lisa Hatcher and Al Kane.

Robin Lohnes, Chairwoman, opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m., August 26, 2002.

Colorado Sate Office

Mr. Koza, Acting State Director, Colorado, welcomed the Board to Colorado. He gave the Board an overview of the Wild Horse and Burro program within the State. He had expressed that the fires in Colorado have been bad, but they had not affected any of the herds. The State has been in a drought situation that has hurt them which resulted in emergency gathers.

Mr. Koza expressed that the Colorado Office has a partnership with the Department of Corrections in Canon City to train and adopt wild horses. He invited the Board to take a tour of their facility. Due to West Nile virus, several horses have died within the state. The facilities have completed immunization for the West Nile virus.

March Minutes

The Board went over the last Board meeting minutes (March, 2002). The following were corrections to the minutes: Page 4, 1st sentence in second paragraph, "BLM can hold money..... although it is an easy task", should read,although it is "**not**" an easy task. Page 6, last sentence in the 1st paragraph, "Don Glenn responded \$123.00 per"; should read, Don Glenn responded \$1.23 per....". Page 10, 2nd paragraph, line 4, "...Palomino Valley Center and it was possible to have the...."; should read, "Palomino Valley Center and **if it was** possible....". The Board moved to approve the changes in the March minutes. Minutes approved as amended.

Mr. Fend reported on the results of the recommendations, to BLM, from the Board. The Board was given a memo from the Office of the Solicitor, dated June 24, 2002, responding to the transfer of wild horses to foreign governments and long-term pasturing of wild horses in foreign countries. A cover memo will be shared with the Board as soon as Mr. Fend receives the fax from Washington. He also noted by the end of November that all horses in our facilities will have been given the West Nile virus vaccination. BLM is attempting to work with Ft Dodge (vaccine) as a sole source

provider (sole source contract). Within the next 30 days the contract will go out; if there are no concerns within the public, the vaccine (West Nile) will be available in 60 days.

The Board expressed their concern that the Forest Service representative (Ralph Giffen) was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Fend expressed that the Forest Service has travel restrictions and they have curtailed travel for the remainder of the fiscal year.

He informed the Board that the Eastern States evaluation will be held in late October or early November.

The marketing contract with Fleishman-Hillard concluded in July. Prior to the selection of the Marketing Specialist, in Washington, Janet Nordin and Debbie Harrington will be the leads in marketing. The Washington Office has received an estimate of 12 applicants for the Marketing Specialist. Also on board is Ted Bailey, Visual Information Specialist, in Billings, MT (full-time basis). A CD ROM is being developed to be used across the Bureau (not completed as yet). Public Affairs has met twice since the National meeting in April - they were receptive to the CD.

Advisory Board Charter

The Secretary's Office signed the new Charter on June 12, 2002; the Secretary of Agriculture signed July 22, 2002; and the Charter was filed on July 29, 2002. John notes that he will have a new signature page in the morning. He explained that BLM has a new format for Charters. The charters need to be very brief. The Charter needs to be in the new format prior to the expiration of the current Charter (within the next 12 months, July 29, 2003). The Board asked to be given the guidelines prior to the next Board meeting. In order for the Board to work on the Charter, it was requested that BLM give the Board a draft of the new charter format.

New Advisory Board Nominations

The committee has completed reviewing the nominations and has forwarded them to Mr. Abbey. Mr. Bob Abbey is the Acting Assistant Director for Renewable Resource through September 27. He will pass it on to the new Assistant Director by end of the month. We hope to have the letters signed by the end of the 120 day extension period (approx. 10/15/02).

Wild Horse Specialist Meeting

Tom Pogacnik was unable to fully attend the meeting. He attended a budget meeting with

Mr. Fend in reference to the impending drought and end of the year costs. Fertility control was discussed (monitoring). APHIS was also involved in the discussions. Tom deferred to Richard Sewing and Bill Higham, Advisory Board members, who attended the meeting. Richard Sewing had concerns pertaining to Langston University (Dr. Holloway) placing horses on public property – facilities may not be adequate for the horses. The Board needs to address this issue. BLM has a partnership with Langston University.

Dr. Holloway will be invited to attend a Board meeting. Langston University is proceeding in a fund raiser to build a facility for wild horses. Richard felt that the local people didn't have much say in the processes. Another concern Richard had was a statement made by a facility manager pertaining to holding too many older horses – which should be shipped to long-term holding. WO and NPO is working with facility managers to address this concern.

Bill recommended that the Board members should attend the Wild Horse Specialist meeting. He felt it was important that the field people feel the Board is here to help them. He expressed that he obtained more information after the meeting. He had concerns with the short-term holding and feeding situations. He suggested that BLM should not have written the hay criteria so stringent; cost of hay. He also expressed concern over how the feed is being dispensed, is it the most efficient way.

Emergency

Drought in the west is severe; received very little rain fall; plants received zero growth. Forage based emergencies pertaining to feed for wild horse. 5 different states; 24 herd management areas. Mares are poorly; 2 fires within herd management areas. By the end of the summer, 3,000 horses will be removed. Ely District – south end of the District and Battle Mountain District are getting worse than the initial review indicated. Gary Zakotnik felt that WY was being punished for keeping their forage in good status; WY is worried that they may lose gather monies. He asked what other states are doing to alleviate drought and induced conditions (i.e., mechanical water troughs, etc.).

Criteria for drought emergency recommendations – The National Program Office established priorities for emergency gathers. Richard noted that he had learned about #3 due to BLM specialists coming to his home with a notification requesting livestock grazing be terminated and all livestock removed in the areas where there is a shortage of wild horse or burro water or forage. Robin was concerned over #2 – she felt there should be further prioritization under item #2.

Budget FY03

Director Clarke had given constraints to the administration. It is unlikely there will be significant increases in the budget. \$30 million dollars will be the budget. The BLM has

up to \$500K reprogramming authority without going to Congress. Any programs with extra monies was searched out for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2002 (through Oct. 1) for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. Pipeline report in the packages.

FY2003 – discussed budget models. FY03 not seeing any additional funding. 1st – flat budget; WO establishing in 2003 an emergency removal fund (1 million), equal to apprx. 1400-1500 horses. The Budget Subcommittee report was given by Larry Johnson. He stated that the subcommittee will not have a final recommendation to the Board until more information is gathered. He will have a recommendation by tomorrow. The subcommittee stressed that BLM look at areas that can be cost effective. Examples: Recommend giving the horses at adoptions the first West Nile vaccine and to rely on the adopters to give the second booster. Revisit the criteria of hay feed at facilities (hay cost). Look at the gather costs (contracting). BLM needs a recommendation from the Board.

John Fend (BLM) gave recognition of Fred Burke and Nat Messer on the work they have done for the Board. They will be receiving plaques in the mail. The Board also thanks them for their participation.

Update on Litigation

Discussed the litigation with Fund for Animals. It was agreed that BLM would not be gathering below the AML range, with exceptions of emergency gathers. It will be effective through the fiscal year 02. Brief status conference with the new judge - both parties spoke with the judge. A status hearing will be held September 4, 2002, at 3:00 p.m. The judge will pass judgement within 60-90 days. There has been two convictions in AZ and OK pertaining to the care of wild horses adopted.

AML Numbers (Hi/Lo numbers)

There is a 3-5 year fluctuation. Cannot gather below AML; numbers would represent the mid-points. Need to run models. General guidance in the model. The Board recommended looking at the emergency drought, fire and also the strain within the pipeline. The Board will be crafting a legislative strategy that we can share with the appropriate people. The Board would like to receive hard statistics, need better handle on what the mitigating circumstances are out there. They also need more information from BLM in order to make recommendations. Need to have individuals, with each of their own expertise, to look at areas where we can make it better. 1. BLM needs to have an emergency fund. 2. Further analysis of the numbers by looking at a few targets. BLM to look at the whole picture and possibly revise some of the national level allocations, get targets established and detailed HMA numbers to Advisory Board. Need accurate numbers on each HMA. You need to be flexible on the number because you cannot establish a definitive number on a wildlife model setting. Gate cuts - should be used on a large number gathers, you need to be careful because of genetics. Any

lower numbers should be looked at. BLM needs priorities with contingency involved. Analyze the Wild Horse & Burro Program within each program element to reach maximum efficiency. Need to have flexibility. Richard inquired on how many pairs have been adopted? No one could give him an answer. He inquired if there were more pairs being held. Contingency fund to be established for fires, etc. was discussed. Eastern States adoptions should be evaluated (more monies are spent in that area). Foals with mother are transported from Reno, Nevada to Sacramento, CA. Facilities freeze brand foals when they are one month old.

Strategy Fertility Control Field Trial Plan

Dr. Singer- Research strategy fertility control field trial plan. It will undergo 3-5 years of research. The plan emphasis is on birth control. John Fend is looking for the Board's endorsement of the Long-Term Strategy Plan and support for the Field Trial Research plan. The Pryors will be treated this fall. APHIS was concerned about health issues pertaining to the immunocontraceptive. These issues have been resolved in the final version of the Field Trial Research Plan. Dr. Merriam recommended that BLM proceed with the research trial.

APHIS concerns: Distinguishing in making sure it be used as a broad management tool. To be used under research only. There should be safety on the animals and human side. It is to remain in a research protocol; not as a management tool. BRD has \$247,000 budgeted for the plan. We need to keep the monies within the Wild Horse and Burro Program. BLM will need to identify the herds that will be used in the research. What is the cost to BLM to keep track of the research (i.e., field technicians, etc.). BRD is funding and conducting the research. Marking of the animals was discussed. \$247,000 is the base funding for BRD for each year. Mr. Kane has a concern with the use of Freund's Complete Adjuvant, but recommends to proceed with awareness. Include safety training with the field personnel. The Field Trial Plans put APHIS concerns at rest. The Board will make a recommendation on the Research Strategy and Field Trial. The animals will be boosted for 4 years and after that time they will be observed for 2 years.

John Fend introduced Al Kane (APHIS) and Debbie Harrington. John had another handout pertaining to the West Nile Virus issue. A policy decision on how to implement the West Nile vaccine and rabies vaccines will be issued.

Public comments began at 4:30 pm.

Tuesday (August 27, 2002) morning the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board convened at 8:00 a.m.

The Board listened to the presentation of Mustangs for Sonora - A Wild Horse Sanctuary given by Merle Edsall. The location is within the Free trade center near Cananea, Sonora. A visitor center is also proposed. This would be a sanctuary for 10,000 wild horses (400,000 acres). The land to hold the animals are separate from one another (ten 40,000 acres). The Board has an issue with compliance. BLM would have to go through legislation and treaty in order to place horses in Sonora. The cost of the holding facility would be substantially less than in the U.S.

Wild Horse and Burro Education Program presentation by Mark Hunter. A Visitor Center would be located in Cookeville, WY. \$528,000 would be the start up cost, which

is needed in fiscal year 2003. Mr. Hunter stated that he had corporate sponsors for \$1.8 million.

Richard Sewing reported on the Honor Farm adoption in Riverton, WY. There is no BLM money involved in the adoption. They have good horses that are very well trained. Total amount from the adoption of the horses went to BLM; unlike the Canon City facility where BLM gets \$125 and they keep the remainder. 59 horses were offered for adoption and 42 were adopted. There were 70 people in attendance. There wasn't any advertisement of the Honor Farm adoption in Riverton, WY. Richard noted the lack of help from public relations or BLM. Their horse chute is very antiquated. Richard would like to have the Board recommend that the Riverton Honor Farm get a new chute.

Board discussion on Sonora - Robin felt that they didn't have enough information at this time. They asked BLM about the time line since we have the solicitor's opinion. What is BLM time line for the Advisory Board yea or nay? The Board would not like to have BLM go ahead without their discussions. The Bureau is to proceed within reason to investigate this. Hillary strongly expressed that long-term holding be within the U.S. and expressed time is better spent looking into placement in the U.S. Budget crisis is very critical and we need to look at what is available (Brent). Wayne expressed further investigation of Sonora. Ron Wenker stated that he felt the Board's recommendation goes a long way with the Bureau. The Board recommend that BLM pursue the legal feasibility and a cost analysis.

Discussion of the monies to be used for marketing the Wild Horse and Burro Education Program. John spoke about funding commitments. Recommended that the Education Program need to partnership with the Foundation. Recommend that BLM pursue a creative way of funding this program with conversations with other groups for funding. Brent suggested the Department of Agriculture. They have a rural program that has monies. Mr. Hunter tried to make contact with the Foundation but apparently did not hook up. John said that BLM can give some seed money - Mr. Hunter is working with some corporate - one man show. It was suggested that BLM spend the seed money on a grant writer. BLM will explore within the BLM and Department of Agriculture.

The Board discussed the following recommendation from the Budget Subcommittee in great detail:

- Gathers may require reduction or postponement, however, minimum goals should be at least equal to foal crops to result in no net population increase.

The statement was unclear, therefore, the Board voted. There was 7 hands for support; both Hillary and Robin voted not to support this. Robin did not clearly understand this item.

Some of the members of the Board left at 12:00 (noon) to catch a plane. There were 5 members left to work on the recommendations.

Meeting adjourned approximately 1:30 p.m.